DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 152 730 SP 012 454

AUTHOR Ahnell, I. V.; And Others
TITLE A Role for State ATE Units in Staff Development.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, Association of Teacher Educators (58th, Las Vegas, Nevada, February 1-3, 1978). Best copy available

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Institutional Role; Instructional Staff; *Organizational Effectiveness; *Professional Associations; Program Development; *Role Theory; *Teacher Educators; *Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS Association of Teacher Educators; *Georgia Association of Teacher Educators

ABSTRACT

The nature of staff development in education and the role that the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) and its Georgia affiliate might play in promoting staff development efforts are discussed. The identification of individual and system needs, the coordination of these needs, and the evolution of programs meeting these needs are seen as the center of any staff development process. ATE is recognized as a major participant in state staff development efforts by virtue of its membership, organizational structure, and concern for education. Elements of professional development which the Georgia ATE (GATE) serves include: communications; an organizational structure reflecting Georgian needs; and a flexibility in marshalling state resources. A participatory role in the development of teacher centers in Georgia is posited for GATE, as well as a role in the direct provision of inservice aid. A process for developing both participatory and GATE-directed programs is discussed. Benefits derived by GATE from staff development efforts are seen as being: increased membership; increased awareness of state problems and concerns; increased recognition of the talents and strengths of professional educators; and increased fiscal support for education. (MJB)

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# A Role For State ATE Units In Staff Development

V. Ahnell, Robert L. Driscoll, Ronald E. Goldenberg

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Staff development has been a concept that has "caught on" perhaps as quickly as any of the recent educational movements. The concept entails an assessment of educational needs of a school system; an assessment of individual needs; a bridging or integration of system and individual needs and finally, a determination of how best to ameliorate those needs.

The amelioration of system and individual needs has gradually forced the awareness that professional development may best be handled through increased sharing of college, public school and state agency resources. The realization of interdependency for educational improvement has further stimulated teacher and professional organization involvement in meeting the wide assortment of needs.

The membership of the Georgia unit of the National Association of Teacher Educators increasingly realizes that it also shares in the responsibility of staff development needs throughout the state of Georgia. Because of the wide base of educational talents that comprise the membership of the state unit, it is projected that a professional organization staff development delivery system could serve to pull together disparate professional educators, who, up to this time have been operating in dichotomous groups. A professional organization (such as the Georgia Association of Teacher Educators) which would systematically serve appropriate staff development needs provides a new basis for increasing national and state commitments to improving teacher education preparation and education for students in public schools.

One element in professional development which the Georgia Association of Teacher Educators serves is in the area "closing the communication gap"

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between teacher educators and teachers. A professional organization which facilitates the unique resources of its membership upon the day-to-day concerns of teaching personnel could well provide a new direction for state and national organizations to play in closing this gap.

Another unique feature of adding a strong professional development component to a state organization is that each state unit has its own pattern for organizing at the state level. For example, the organizational structure which GATE has is related to Georgia's particular teacher education needs. We will need to adapt our state organizational pattern to fit the needs of providing professional services to all areas of Georgia. The adaptation of organizational structure then, may be necessary for other states as well as regional associations in order to meet this goal. The key is found in integrating the resources of statewide membership into the particular educational needs of school systems and universities throughout a state. This is indeed an increased "action oriented" role for a professional organization.

Flexibility in organizing around membership resources, statewide organization frameworks, and state educational needs, provides a future challenge almost unparalled in the on-going, evolutionary change of the Georgia Association of Teacher Educators. The same concept can be expanded to other state and regional A.T.E. organizations to provide another basis upon which professionalism can be developed.

In many states, school systems and colleges have developed some form of consortia to serve teacher education needs. These consortia have generally focused upon offering courses for college credits. In some regions of the country it has been a practice for teacher unions and teacher organizations to provide workshops and materials to meet teacher needs, without college credit.

Many school systems, through local or state arrangements, provide staff development programs which enable teachers to earn increment credits (and sometimes college credits) while developing additional teaching competencies.

It is apparent from the strong push for the establishment of teacher centers that these aforementioned modes of teacher education have been perceived by many teachers as not adequately meeting their needs. From their inception, teacher centers have offered the advantage of providing special help to teachers only as teachers desire it and primarily upon the basis of need as identified by individual teachers. Obviously, there is a need for improving teacher education staff development services throughout the nation. It is our belief that state ATE units can and should play a major leadership role in this process.

In addition, few teacher education institutions provide real opportunity for individual staff development. Most of those in higher education could gain a great deal from interacting regularly with job-alike persons from other institutions within a state or region. State ATE units can provide leadership in this area as well.

Professional associations bring together many individuals who have common professional purposes and unique individual capabilities. State ATE units are exceptional examples of professional groups that can provide a special contribution to teacher education within a state. The ATE unit is the one single association within a state that has among its membership public and private school teachers and administrators, state department of education personnel, and teacher education faculty.

To our knowledge, no state ATE unit has developed a program for directly providing and delivering teacher education services to in-service members of the

profession. We believe, through its unique membership composition, that state ATE units have something special to offer to teachers; individuals with unparalleled expertise and individuals concerned about education in the state. It is proposed that from this base state ATE units mobilize to help meet teacher needs throughout a state.

How can such a program be developed? Let us relate this question to a particular state. In Georgia there is one ATE unit. The unit could establish a Staff Development committee under the supervision of the GATE Executive Committee. The purposes of the Staff Development committee would be to initiate the program, to assess the availability of various resources, and to arrange for utilization of the resources by educational personnel.

A survey would need to be initiated to determine which individuals of the membership have particular expertise that they would be willing to share with others. Those who have instructional modules or materials that could be reproduced for individual use or group sharing would indicate this. From the survey, a directory of available resources would be compiled. Through participation with the Georgia Association of Educators, school system superintendents, and schools of education, the directory would be made available to all interested personnel with instructions for obtaining the resources.

Delivery systems for utilizing and dissemenating these resources would be determined by the state ATE Staff Development Committee, but could include one day drive-ins, in-service school day workshops, and called college departmental faculty meetings. In addition, instructional modules and materials could be requested by mail and an individual GATE member might be able to work with a group of participants on a consultant basis as part of a college service workload or in conjunction with professional leave from a school system.

Topics which might evolve fro an expertise survey could range from classroom discipline, learning centers, faculty evaluation, pupil assessment, learning module development, and competency assessment to role development of college supervisors. The range is unlimited. The state ATE unit could serve as a clearing house to provide the best ways to provide interested individuals with the expertise and resources they desire. We don't always need a national expert to help us. Frequently the colleague around the corner will do as well or better.

Financing of such a project might be accomplished through a state department of education grant, from a local school system, or by individual participants on a small fee basis. It is intended that individual time would be contributed so that funding requirements would be held to a minimum, for travel and per diem only. With the state ATE unit providing the organizational structure and voluntarily coordinating the services, and with colleges and schools providing limited faculty and material supplies the total budgeted costs should be minimal.

There are some obvious benefits to be derived by not only the educators and children served by the state ATE but also the state unit and National ATE through such a program. The first of these benefits is membership. With increased exposure of the state unit to various segments of the education community, a concerted effort could be mounted to increase and broaden membership. It is foreseen that persons deriving services from the state ATE unit's consultative services would perceive the worth of the organization and support the unit by joining. The present membership, mainly consisting of college faculty, could be broadened to include teachers, supervisory personnel, and administrators from both the public and private sectors.

The second major benefit to be derived from an outreach program by a state unit such as the one proposed in this paper is the opportunity for the membership to become aware of problems and concerns of other educational groups in the state. Cloistered as we sometimes are, either by geographic region or by educational level, we are prone to be shortsighted in terms of "on the line" problems of educators whose work is somewhat different than our own. An outreach program can help to bring these problems and concerns into focus. Concentrating the talents and expertise of the state unit's membership on some of these concerns may help to bring about their resolution.

In the same vein, the third benefit of the proposed staff development services program is the opportunity to recognize the talents and strengths of the many professional educators in each of our states. Through lending this expertise to others, these hardworking educators can gain recognition for their talents by having the opportunity to work with those individuals and various publics who need them.

The fiscal support of education has increased appreciably over the past few years. However, dollars spent on education in proportion to the ability to pay for it are still shamefully low. Teacher education and the teaching profession will gain a large measure of creditability through this proposed state ATE role in assuming leadership to establish and implement a viable program in teacher education services. Hopefully, this new creditability will enhance the possibility for greater funding for education at the state level.